



NECE Conference 2021

“Committed to change! Reimagining the future of citizenship education in Europe”

Committed to change!

It is safe to say that the years 2020/21 will be remembered as a crisis with a global impact. Historization of the present time makes societies more aware of the past and future. A look at the last decades shows that the COVID-19 pandemic was only one of many, but very different crises. The transformation in Eastern and South-East Europe in the early 1990s, the economic collapse in 2008/09 and the migration movements in 2015/16 are just a few examples. Crises come and go, but what remains?

The lexeme of the ancient Greek word "crisis" includes a variety of meanings, also positive readings such as “investigation”, “choice” and “decision”. In all crises, societies have been forced to investigate the origin of the ongoing situation and the various courses of action that could have been taken. Crises confront societies with bifurcation points and questions regarding resilience. We are obliged to look into the past - what went wrong? And into the future - where do we want to head? Consequently, crisis also means transformation.

Reimagining the future of citizenship education (CE) in Europe

Citizenship education must see itself as an ally and enabler of transformation in order to make the society we live in more just, more sustainable and more democratic. However, it should not be conceived as a mere reaction to local and global problems. The importance of diverse and multi-perspective educational work has become clear in recent months. The general conditions for the entire scene are affected. Funding particularly for small players is not guaranteed in view of the difficult economic situation, although the need for education is increasing. **What would it mean to consider citizenship education a top political priority, not only in order to better deal with a risky world, but fundamentally because the citizenship education a society delivers to itself is an image of the world and society it wants to create (NECE Declaration 2020).**

The 2021 NECE Conference in Brussels will bring together the European CE community to ask questions about the future of citizenship, democracy and society and the role of citizenship education. How can education prepare and engage citizens with new forms of participation? How does CE engage with digitalization and sustainable development issues? With the COVID-19 pandemic, old and new challenges to politics, economy and society are becoming visible. Social inequality, polarisation of public life and power imbalances are gaining ground at regional, national and international levels. The gap between rich and poor has widened, populist and anti-science movements have grown and human-induced climate change continues. How can CE set an agenda and prepare for the future, knowing that the next crisis will come, while allowing all segments of society to participate in the process, regardless of affiliation, ethnicity, faith, and socio-economic backgrounds? The important





resources of diverse societies can cultivate a multi-perspective and inclusive approach that constitutes a pluralistic democracy in the 21st century, which is what we are aiming for.

The pandemic is ongoing – we are still connected

We invite you to Brussels, where EU decision-making is happening on a daily basis, to share the skills, practices and knowledge that has been gained in 70 countries (NECE 2020 in Berlin). On 28 and 29 October, we are hoping to connect once again to debate and discuss and to agree and disagree, in line with the good tradition at the heart of European politics.

